



SAINT PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH FORT BENTON

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 2025

THE GIFT OF NEW BEGINNINGS: WELCOMING THE NEW YEAR AT ST. PAUL'S

As the calendar turns and we prepare to welcome a new year, we find ourselves once again at the threshold of possibility. The arrival of January is more than just the beginning of a new chapter; it is an invitation to reflect, reset, and renew. At St. Paul's Episcopal Church, we are reminded that God's mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23), and this promise feels particularly poignant as we step into the opportunities and challenges of a new year.

A TIME FOR REFLECTION

Before we rush forward into 2025, let us take a moment to reflect on the year we leave behind. What have been the joys, the lessons, and the blessings of this past year? Where have we seen God's hand guiding us through both triumphs and trials? Reflection is a spiritual practice that allows us to see more clearly where we have been, to celebrate God's faithfulness, and to prepare our hearts for what lies ahead.

Consider setting aside a few moments in the coming days to journal or pray about the past year. Were there unexpected blessings that brought joy or hope? Were there challenges that deepened your faith or called you to lean more fully on God's strength? These reflections can become guideposts as we move forward, reminding us of God's presence and provision in all circumstances.

EMBRACING RENEWAL

The start of a new year often brings with it resolutions and goals. For many, it's a chance to turn over a new leaf. But as Christians, we know that true renewal comes not through our own striving but through the transformative power of God's love and grace. This is a time to recommit ourselves to prayer, worship, and service—renewing not just our outward lives, but also our hearts and spirits.

Perhaps 2025 could be the year you dive deeper into your faith journey. Whether through participating in a Bible study, joining a ministry, or simply attending worship services more regularly, let this year be one of spiritual growth. For families, it might be an opportunity to build faith traditions at home, such as praying together before

meals or reading Scripture with children. For individuals, it could be a time to explore silence and solitude with God, seeking His voice amidst the busyness of life.

NEW BEGINNINGS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

The new year also offers us an opportunity to dream and envision what lies ahead for St. Paul's. What new ministries might we begin? How can we continue to live into our mission of being the hands and feet of Christ in our community?

As we ponder these questions, let us trust in God's guidance, knowing that He is always doing a new thing in our midst (Isaiah 43:19). In the coming months, we look forward to new opportunities for outreach and fellowship, and we invite everyone to be part of shaping these endeavors.

Imagine the impact we could make if each one of us embraced a spirit of service this year. Whether it's volunteering for an existing ministry or helping to launch something new, there is a place for everyone to contribute their unique gifts. Together, we can be a force for good in our local community, embodying Christ's love in tangible and transformative ways.

HOPE AND ANTICIPATION

The turning of the year is a reminder of the eternal hope we have in Christ. Just as each new day dawns with the light of God's presence, so too does each year arrive filled with promise. It is a time to hold fast to hope and to walk forward in faith, trusting that God's plans for us are good, filled with a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11).

At St. Paul's, we will continue to celebrate this hope through our worship, fellowship, and outreach efforts. From Sunday services to small group gatherings, from outreach events to quiet moments of prayer in our sanctuary, every activity we undertake is an opportunity to witness to the hope we have in Christ.

Let us also carry this hope into our relationships. The new year offers a chance to reconcile with others, to mend broken bonds, and to extend grace where it is needed most. As followers of Jesus, we are called to be peacemakers, and there is no better time than now to embody that calling.

A CALL TO ACTION

As we step into 2025, let us do so with open hearts and willing spirits, ready to embrace the new beginnings God has prepared for us. Here are a few practical ways to start the year on a strong spiritual footing:

1. **Set Spiritual Goals** – Consider choosing a Scripture verse or spiritual practice to focus on throughout the year. Write it down and revisit it often.
2. **Get Involved** – Make a commitment to join a ministry, attend a Bible study, or volunteer in an area where your talents can shine.
3. **Invite Others** – Extend an invitation to someone who might not yet feel connected to our church community. A small gesture of hospitality can have a big impact.
4. **Pray Without Ceasing** – Dedicate time each day to prayer, asking God to guide your steps and bless our community as we journey through the year.

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

As we welcome the new year, let us remember that we do not journey alone. Together, as a church family, we can support and encourage one another, celebrating our shared faith and working together to bring God's light into the world.

May 2025 be a year of growth, renewal, and abundant blessings for you and your loved ones. And may St. Paul's continue to be a place where all are welcomed, nourished, and sent forth to do God's work.

Happy New Year, St. Paul's family! May the grace and peace of Christ fill your hearts and homes as we move forward together.

Faithfully,

Tim+

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

January 5	Morning Prayer and Homily, 10 AM
January 12	Holy Eucharist and Homily, 10 AM Vestry Meeting, 11AM
January 19	Morning Prayer and Homily, 10 AM
January 26	Holy Eucharist and Homily, 10 AM—Bible Study to follow service
February 2	Morning Prayer and Homily, 10 AM
February 9	Holy Eucharist and Homily, 10 AM—Bible Study to follow service
February 16	Morning Prayer and Homily, 10 AM
February 26	Holy Eucharist and Homily, 10 AM—Bible Study to follow service

Please check the *River Press* for details and possible changes of service times

PRAYER REQUESTS

For solace, comfort, and healing for Celeste, Cole, Gena, Marcia, and Wyley.

For wisdom and compassion on the part of all our elected officials as they carry out their duties.

PARISH NEWS

The Vestry has been in contact with Tree Amigos tree service in Great Falls regarding the cottonwood trees that need to be removed. Their winter discount discount, reducing the cost of removing the three trees to \$11,565. Work will commence in February or March, depending on the weather.

Discussions regarding repair of the alter window are ongoing.



BISHOP'S VISITATION

Bishop Marty visited Saint Paul's and preached on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 22. She met with representatives of the Vestry to talk about a variety of topics ranging from life at Saint Paul's to issues facing small parishes and news about the national church.

Here she is wearing the mitre of the Bishop of Montana. We may be biased, but don't you agree that it is the finest mitre in all of Christendom?

Editor's Note: Unlike the secular world, our celebration of Christmas continues until Epiphany, January 6. Here are some thoughts about Christmas to take you into the new year.

God came to us because he wanted to join us on the road, to listen to our story, and to help us realize that we are not walking in circles but moving towards the house of peace and joy. This is the great mystery of Christmas that continues to give us comfort and consolation: we are not alone on our journey. The God of love who gave us life sent his only Son to be with us at all times and in all places, so that we never have to feel lost in our struggles but always can trust that he walks with us.

The challenge is to let God be who he wants to be. A part of us clings to our aloneness and does not allow God to touch us where we are most in pain. Often we hide from him precisely those places in ourselves where we feel guilty, ashamed, confused, and lost. Thus we do not give him a chance to be with us where we feel most alone.

Christmas is the renewed invitation not to be afraid and to let him—whose love is greater than our own hearts and minds can comprehend—be our companion.

Henri Nouwen, *Gracias!: A Latin American Journal*

Thanks to Nancy Monelli who brought this text to our attention.



Ginger bread Saint Paul's,
by Fort Benton resident Nancy Lachapelle



Please send contributions for future issues to Dean Glawe, daglawe@earthlink.net, or call him (509) 332-9966, or mail to St. Paul's Episcopal Church, PO Box 463, Fort Benton, MT 59442.